

# VIRGINIA WILDLIFE

JANUARY 2009

FOUR DOLLARS



Engravings for Kings



Eagles on the Potomac



Trapping Tales





## Bob Duncan Executive Director



January ushers in Governor Kaine's "Year of the Environment," a time to re-focus attention and commitment to all that naturally sustains us. Accordingly, state employees are recalibrating the way we do business and considering new ways to engage Virginians in environmental stewardship.

We know that wildlife management involves both opportunities and costs. Our department seeks opportunities to restore and maintain healthy populations of animals that provide untold recreational benefits to people. Doing so takes money, of course, and as more conflicts arise between people and animals spilling into each other's territory, those costs will increase.

The governor's 2009 challenge presents an opportune time to "tee up" our discussion about climate change. How we respond to it is of critical importance and being addressed by the state's brightest minds from varied disciplines, who sit on the Governor's Commission on Climate Change. We will periodically feature related stories and editorials over the coming months.

We understand that warming temperatures, rising sea level, and the loss of flora will affect all wild animals and their habitats, especially those most vulnerable living in aquatic zones. The first and greatest losses will occur at either end of the elevation spectrum—within the undated wetlands of Virginia's coast and the stressed spruce and fir forests of the Allegheny Highlands.

As we look down the road, then, it is with renewed appreciation for the governor's 400,000-acre land conservation

goal. To Virginia's wildlife, an accommodating landscape will become more necessary than ever before. We've been covering stories about Virginians taking measures to protect important wildlife travel corridors, forestland, edge habitats and riparian zones, and other land values they hold dear by using the tool of a conservation ease-

ment. We will continue to do so.

Internally, we've implemented new programs that respond directly to Virginia's Energy Plan ([www.governor.virginia.gov/TempContent/2007\\_VA\\_Energy\\_Plan-Full\\_Document.pdf](http://www.governor.virginia.gov/TempContent/2007_VA_Energy_Plan-Full_Document.pdf)): examining ways to make our Richmond office complex more energy efficient; methodically converting our fleet to more fuel efficient vehicles; and encouraging carpooling and smart driving practices among our employees. We've launched a fishing line recycling effort and placed collection canisters for recycling spent ammunition throughout our management areas. These actions big and small will reduce our collective drain on the natural resource base and, at the same time, save money.

The natural challenges we face are great, but I remain optimistic that by bringing the best science to bear, we will prepare for the adaptations necessary. Our staff is accustomed to working in the realm of the physical world, where processes are dynamic and change is inevitable. We will continue to marshal the best of our people resources and energies in order to advise you about the changes we witness in the field, and to galvanize your continued support for the fish and wildlife of Virginia.

### Mission Statement

To manage Virginia's wildlife and inland fish to maintain optimum populations of all species to serve the needs of the Commonwealth; To provide opportunity for all to enjoy wildlife, inland fish, boating and related outdoor recreation and to work diligently to safeguard the rights of the people to hunt, fish and harvest game as provided for in the Constitution of Virginia; To promote safety for persons and property in connection with boating, hunting and fishing; To provide educational outreach programs and materials that foster an awareness of and appreciation for Virginia's fish and wildlife resources, their habitats, and hunting, fishing, and boating opportunities.

*Dedicated to the Conservation of Virginia's Wildlife and Natural Resources*

Commonwealth of Virginia  
Timothy M. Kaine, Governor

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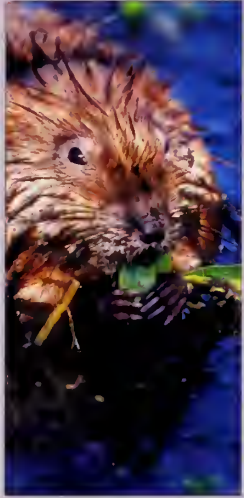
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A large rodent, the muskrat (*Ondatra zibethicus*) flourishes in rivers across the state where floating plants, tubers, and small crustaceans are plentiful. Muskrats were trapped routinely into the 1980s

and harvested for their fur. See related story on page 14. ©F. Eugene Hester



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# Engraving The

*Master engravers  
across the state touch  
lives far from home.*

story by Clarke C. Jones  
photos by Dwight Dyke

For the beginning artist, it would be like standing beside Norman Rockwell while he painted ... for a novice writer, like hovering over Hemingway's typewriter as words magically formed on a page. That is the closest I can describe the feeling I experienced while watching Lisa Tomlin engrave the hair on the back of an elephant—an elephant which serves as the focal point on the receiver of a shotgun. Her work is that detailed, that exacting.

Many high-end gun manufacturers, whose business it is "to know," consider Lisa Tomlin to be one of the top engravers in the world. You would think that someone with that much talent would be easy to find. She is not. You might say it was divine intervention that led me to her. Dr. Raymond Spence, an avid sportsman and former defensive end for the Louisiana State University Tigers, retired in 2007 after 45 years as the pastor of Second Baptist Church in Richmond, Virginia. In tribute to his years of service, he was given a retirement gift by his congregation: a special gift, a one-of-a-kind Parker Brothers shotgun engraved by Lisa Tomlin. Knowing how much I would appreciate such a work of art, he kindly invited me to see it.

It is not often a man is given a gift which bestows on him such extreme emotions: pride in the fact that he





now possesses a true treasure, enhanced by a true artist, and humility, kindled by the love and admiration of his congregation who presented him with such a thoughtful token of appreciation.

Engraved on Dr. Spence's 20 gauge Parker A-1 Special shotgun were his two favorite bird dogs, his dead-rise fishing boat, and his church, along with the initials LSU on the trigger guard. Outside of his dear wife of nearly 50 years and his two sons, Lisa Tomlin had captured the very essence of the man and what he loves. One cannot help but marvel at the detail of Lisa's work on Dr. Spence's Parker. Lisa even added the shade from a standing oak tree as it cast its shadow on the right side of Second Baptist Church, as well as the links in the chain fence in front of the building.



*Above: Lisa Tomlin transfers art to the metal to begin the engraving process. Her engravings capture the spirit of the hunter in a personal way. **Bottom left:** Art nouveau has been engraved on a Winchester Model 53 for a collector in Idaho.*

# ir Niche

While admiring the engraving on Dr. Spence's gun, he informed me that Ms. Tomlin had also engraved guns presented to former President George H. W. Bush, General Norman Schwarzkopf, and General Chuck Yeager. My first thought was, "Who in a Richmond Baptist church knows world-class engravers, and in what city across the globe does she live?" Then Dr. Spence informed me that Lisa Tomlin hails from the small hamlet of Evington, Virginia, just south of Lynchburg.

In the early 1980s, Ken Hurst, who at the time was a master engraver for Colt, owned an engraving production company out of Concord, Virginia. Hurst's company not only engraved knives and guns, but also performed commemorative work for Quail Unlimited and Ducks Unlimited, among others. Engraver Jack Jones, Jr. of Forest, Virginia, who







Jack Jones, Jr. inspects a Colt Single Action .45 caliber revolver that he has engraved.

worked for Hurst, stated, "The Lynchburg area, at that time, had more engravers per capita in the world, with the exception of Italy."

Jack, who books his business mostly by word of mouth, has customers all over the world. He has just finished engraving a Scottish family's castle on a Ruger 30.06. When Ken Hurst closed his production facility, a number of Virginia engravers such as Jones, Tomlin, George, and Davidson went out on their own.

Tim George of Altavista, Virginia, specializes in knife engraving and may complete only one gun a year. George feels that artwork on guns is usually limited to the traditional. "With knives, I can do Deco or Nouveau styles. I have been able over the years to develop my own style of scroll work, and I am proud that my customers recognize it as being particular to me. Engraving guns, to me, is like writing a novel. Engraving knives is like writing po-

etry." Tim must be quite a poet, because there is often a two-year waiting period for his knife work.

Tim, who also teaches engraving, says his work does not seem to be affected by the economy. "It is one of the few things we are *exporting*. American engravers are known throughout the world."

For those who would like to work at home, it may be the kind of profession one is looking for. "If you are artistic and can sit for 40 hours a week, you can be an engraver," said George.

Jere Davidson, another engraver from the Lynchburg area, engraves for Dakota Arms and also, Connecticut Shotgun Mfg. His biggest fan, however, may be Edmund Davidson (no relation) of Goshen, Virginia, and one of the premier knife makers in the state. You can find Edmund's knife work and Jere's engraving in the book, *The Art of the Integral Knife*.

"I have used Jere as my engraver

for 18 consecutive years," said Edmund. "My knife work is just another form of art. It is 'art with an edge.' I have a number of collectors in Virginia, but I ship knives all over the world. I chose Jere to do my engraving because he is totally, and always, creative. To me, Jere's engraving 'flows' and it works extremely well with my art. He has never done a knife for me that was the same pattern."





In the early 1990s, Lisa Tomlin was “discovered.”

Lisa’s talent for drawing got noticed, and it was then recommended she put that talent to use as an engraver. “I went to Ken and asked him for a job. He said he wasn’t hiring anyone at that time, but he gave me a piece of paper the size of a quarter and asked me to draw an elk on that paper. After he saw my drawing, he hired me,” Tomlin related.

Working on a piece of steel or gold which will be part of a high-end product requires focus and great attention to detail. There is little room for error.

“I learned using the hammer-and-chisel method, the way the Italians engraved many centuries ago. With a hammer and chisel, the engraver has to be very careful that the chisel does not slip. It is one of the hardest things an engraver has to learn when using that method. I bet I had to make *one thousand* commas before Ken would let me work on a real engraving,” Lisa emphasized.

Tomlin is aware of the newer tools used for engraving and explained, “Some engravers today use an air tool called a Graver Max and I may use it on rare occasions for a background, but I still prefer the hammer-and-chisel method. It just works better for me, and I believe it makes my work more personable.” Lisa also makes her own engraving tools.

It was around this time that John Bolliger, well-known custom gun maker and founder of Mountain Riflery, was looking for someone to do a



*Tim George sets up to engrave a Warren Osborne knife. He will engrave the bolsters, part of the knife handle on both sides of the jade, shown below.*

special project—the annual auction gun for Safari Club International. A bull elephant was to be engraved on a bolt action rifle as the last animal engraved in a collection of guns titled, the “Most Dangerous Game Series.” At auction, the gun brought \$165,000.

Bolliger described the importance of an engraver this way: “Although our guns are artwork, they are designed to be used. Some will hunt with them. Some want them as a

display. Our market is the top two to three percent of those individuals buying guns. We just supplied a gun to the King of Spain. That is why the skill of an engraver is so important. I have built guns whose value was diminished by a poor engraver and whose value was enhanced by a skilled engraver.” Bolliger’s company, at this writing, holds the world record for the most money paid for an American-made rifle.







Here (and shown below) Jere Davidson engraves a red stag on a Dakota Arms Model 76 rifle.

Another custom gun manufacturer, the John Rigby Company from California, was commissioned to build a gun which would be a gift to former President George Bush. Lisa Tomlin was hired to engrave that gun. Geoff Miller, managing director at the company, feels that an engraver must be able to do at least four things well. "Their artwork must fit exactly and correctly on the piece that is to be engraved. They must be excellent at producing a believable game scene. They must be able to do scroll work. And finally, they must be able to do the lettering. Lisa can do all four, and do all four extremely well. I think if Lisa is not *the* top engraver in the world at this moment, she is definitely in the *top three*."

Because of the time it takes to engrave a shotgun well, Lisa can produce maybe five guns a year, and because of the demand for her work, the value of her engraving increases 15–20% each year. As Miller put it, "Let's say she keeps engraving for another twenty years. That is only one hundred guns. Her work, to the collector of fine guns, will be as famous as a Picasso."

The engraving that these individuals do is truly art. It should not be confused with what we call engraving when we go to the local mall to have our initials scratched into a Jefferson Cup. Nor is it a mass-produced, computer engraved plate which is added to a mass-produced gun or knife you find at your local sporting goods store. No, this is an



original. It may take weeks or months to complete. And just like any fine art, it builds its own cadre of worldwide collectors who are willing to wait years just to have a masterpiece created by these select engravers. It is hard sometimes to comprehend, while watching these artists sitting hunched over a table wearing huge Opti-Visor goggle-like glasses, that they delicately hammer and chisel something as fine as the hair of an elephant on metal no larger than a fifty-cent piece.

Lisa Tomlin probably speaks for all engravers across the state when she said, "I believe my engraving ability is God-given. I am passionate about the detail of my engraving and the accuracy of the animals in the engraving." Maybe that is what people see in their art. Maybe that is why presidents and kings wait patiently for their work. There is nothing like having a God-given gift and being passionate about it! □

Clarke C. Jones spends his spare time with his black Labrador retriever, Luke, hunting up good stories. You can visit Clarke and Luke on their Web site at [www.clarkecjones.com](http://www.clarkecjones.com).



# Where *Eagles Soar*







©Dwight Dyke

## History Trumps Development

Archaeologists have documented Early-Middle Woodland through Late Woodland period habitations on Mason Neck—people who used pits and platform hearths. The first recorded history tells us that Captain John Smith, English explorer, sailed up the Patowomeck River in 1608 and met the Moyumpse tribe (later called the Dogue). These native Americans said Smith came on a “winged canoe,” when he visited their encampment called “Tauxenent.” In 1755, namesake George Mason, IV, author of the *Virginia Declaration of Rights*, built his Georgian plantation home on the Neck.

The area was logged and farmed in the 1800s and 1900s. In the 1960s, as development exploded and two bald eagle nests were spotted, locals mobilized. Over the years, people have killed many schemes targeted at Mason Neck, including a 20,000-person satellite city, a deep-sea port, an outer beltway, a museum, an aerosol spraying tower, a landfill, an airport, a resort island, a gas pipeline, and a sewer line.

## *Bald eagles find safe haven at Mason Neck, just beyond the nation's capital.*

by Glenda C. Booth

**T**he 50 bald eagles that winter on Fairfax County's Mason Neck peninsula and the six that nest there from January to June do not know if they are in a state park, a federal refuge, or on private property. And they're not bothered that the bureaucracy “delisted” them last year.

They forage, perch, roost and nest in this rare natural jewel in the “backyard” of the rapidly urbanizing Fairfax County, population one million. They seem unfazed by the cacophony of five million people coming and going in a metropolitan area 18 miles south of the nation's capital.

At the bottom of this boot-shaped, 9,000-acre chunk of land jut-

ting out into the Potomac River are the adjoining Mason Neck State Park and the Mason Neck Wildlife Refuge. Manager Jeff Lowry calls it a “small park,” at 1,824 acres. The refuge next door, at 2,277 acres, is part of the Potomac River National Wildlife Refuge complex. In a county reaching build-out, undeveloped areas of any size are precious crucibles of life among the inexorable spread of “McMansions,” big box stores, strip malls, highways, and parking lots.

“There are places on the Neck where it seems like one is in a remote wilderness, alone with the soothing sounds of nature,” said Gary Knipping, an area resident. “Only a distant commuter train whistle or a skyward vapor trail remind you how close to suburbia one is.”



Great blue heron ©Jack Mills





*Acres of wetlands brush up against fruit-bearing hardwoods, offering much needed habitat to a range of species.*

The park and refuge are managed for passive recreation and education. The refuge was the first refuge in the nation created to protect the bald eagle, which was listed as federally endangered from 1978 until 1995, when the designation was lowered to "threatened," and then in August 2007, "delisted" under the Endangered Species Act.

## The Park

Begun in 1967, Mason Neck State Park features hardwood forests of oaks, beeches, hollies, and hickories. Five miles of gentle, self-guided trails meander through woods and along the edges of wetlands. Wilson's Spring Trail leads to a blind for viewing waterfowl and beavers. The Eagle Spur trail ends at the fingers of the Kane's Creek blind, a popular feeding site for ospreys and great blue herons.

Up to 200 species of birds have been spotted. Many of the park's animals are nocturnal. Interpretive pro-

grams with titles like "Rambling Reptiles," "Eat or Be Eaten" (about the food web), and "Insect Intrigue" educate both young and old. The visitors' center has informative displays, hand-on activities, and a resource library. A Junior Rangers program for children ages 6 to 11 promotes conservation ethics.

In the spring, summer, and fall, the park rents bicycles, canoes, kayaks, and one picnic shelter. There's a cartop boat launch, and fishing from the shoreline or by canoe is available. A winter walk can feel like a meditation in "nature's cathedral," with the quiet disturbed only by the soft crackle of lingering beech leaves or the flutter of a mourning dove.

What are the park's challenges? "Our goal is conservation. We want to provide habitat for the bald eagle," said Lowry. "The challenge is to convince people who come here of that goal and to develop interpretive programs consistent with conservation."



©Dwight Dyke





He cites the special challenge of “presenting the conservation message” to people of varied ethnic backgrounds (approximately 150 languages are spoken in Fairfax County, according to school officials). “My goal is to get people to think that all of this is theirs. It would make it an easier job if everyone wanted to protect it,” Lowry continued.

## The Refuge

Abutting the park is the Elizabeth Hartwell Mason Neck National Wildlife Refuge, named for the “eagle lady.” Hartwell, who died in 2000, led the charge to preserve Mason Neck and earned this moniker when she was greeted by developers flapping their arms like eagles at a public hearing.

The refuge has 4.4 miles of shoreline, a mature oak-hickory forest, and one of the largest freshwater wetlands in northern Virginia: the 285-acre Great Marsh.

The largest great blue heron rookery in the mid-Atlantic, with almost 1,600 nests during 2007, is here. Surveys have documented over 200 species of birds, 31 species of mammals, and 44 species of reptiles and amphibians on the refuge.

Visitors can hike several woodsy trails, including two that offer views of waterfowl in Great Marsh.

Managers are preparing a comprehensive conservation plan and see few controversies surfacing. “Delisting of the bald eagle did not change our management, because the refuge was established for eagles

and we try to protect them from disturbances,” said Greg Weiler, Refuge Manager.

Controlling invasive plants like Japanese stiltgrass and managing the 1,900 acres of forest to generate a “pipeline” of trees are ongoing challenges. River traffic, like JetSkis®, may contribute to shoreline erosion. Demands never abate. “The public always wants more,” said Weiler, who has a staff of six to provide educational and interpretive activities. The refuge lost its biologist position, he laments.

DGIF’s Birding and Wildlife Trail splices through Mason Neck. “Places like Mason Neck State Park and Refuge provide opportunities close to large urban and suburban centers for people to experience wild places. One part of the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries’ mission is to provide opportunities for people to enjoy wildlife-related recreation. The Birding and Wildlife Trail provides over 650 such opportunities,” said Jeffrey Trollinger, DGIF’s Watchable Wildlife Program manager.

The National Park Service’s new Captain John Smith National Historic Trail also skirts along the peninsula.

A managed deer hunt, run jointly by the park and refuge, is held annually in late November or early December, because in 1994 managers realized that the deer were in poor health and eating everything within reach. In 2007, for 90 hunters the take was 111 deer.

## Critical Eagle Habitat

When European settlers arrived in America, there were half a million bald eagles. In 1963, their numbers had plummeted to 417 breeding pairs in the lower 48 states. In 2007, that number had rebounded to over 9,000 breeding pairs. In Virginia, the number of breeding pairs has jumped from 50 to over 550 in 25 years.

Biologists say the resurgence of the bald eagle is one of the world’s greatest conservation success stories, but available habitat is key to their survival. “Virginia’s bald eagle population depends upon a very limited





## For More Information

On the 8,800-acre Mason Neck peninsula, 6,600 acres are managed cooperatively by five regional, state, and federal agencies.

### Mason Neck State Park

7301 High Point Road  
Lorton, Virginia 22079-4010  
703-339-2385 or 703-339-2380 (visitor center)  
[www.dcr.virginia.gov/state\\_parks/mas.shtml](http://www.dcr.virginia.gov/state_parks/mas.shtml)

### Virginia Birding and Wildlife Trail

[www.dgif.virginia.gov/vbwt](http://www.dgif.virginia.gov/vbwt)

### Gunston Hall Plantation

10709 Gunston Road  
Lorton, Virginia 22079  
703-550-9220  
[www.gunstonhall.org](http://www.gunstonhall.org)

### Mason Neck Wildlife Refuge

7603 High Point Road  
Lorton, Virginia 22079  
703-490-4979  
[www.fws.gov/refuges/profiles/index.cfm?id=51610](http://www.fws.gov/refuges/profiles/index.cfm?id=51610)

### The Potomac River National Wildlife Refuge Complex

has two other refuges,  
Occoquan Bay  
<http://www.fws.gov/refuges/profiles/index.cfm?id=51611>  
and Featherstone  
[www.fws.gov/refuges/profiles/index.cfm?id=51612](http://www.fws.gov/refuges/profiles/index.cfm?id=51612)

### Meadowood Recreation Management Area

10406 Gunston Road  
Lorton, Virginia 22079  
703-399-8009  
[www.blm.gov](http://www.blm.gov) (search on Meadowood)

### Captain John Smith National Historic Trail

Chesapeake Bay Program, National Park Service  
410 Severn Avenue, Suite 109  
Annapolis, Maryland 21403  
410-267-5720  
[www.nps.gov/cajo](http://www.nps.gov/cajo)

### Pohick Bay Regional Park

6501 Pohick Bay Drive,  
Lorton, Virginia 22079  
703-339-6104 (camp center)  
[www.nvrpa.org/parks/pohickbay/index.php](http://www.nvrpa.org/parks/pohickbay/index.php)

### The Friends of the Potomac River Refuges

14344 Jefferson Davis Highway  
Woodbridge, Virginia 22191  
703-636-4115  
[www.foprr.org](http://www.foprr.org)

amount of suitable habitat, found mainly along our tidal rivers in the Chesapeake Bay region," wrote Edward Clark, President of the Wildlife Center of Virginia, last July. "There is strong evidence that the available bald eagle habitat is approaching carrying capacity. In other words, it's filling up. At some point ... there simply will be no room for more eagles to nest in Virginia. If the habitat shrinks, the bald eagle population will decline as well."

Mason Neck's mix of forest, field, wetland, and shoreline provide a rich biodiversity of habitat, rare in northern Virginia. The peninsula's protected lands are a shining example of citizen-driven conservation that provides a proud and almost pristine home for our nation's symbol in an increasingly crowded world. □

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*Glenda Booth, a freelance writer and legislative consultant, grew up in Southwest Virginia and has lived in Northern Virginia for 39 years. She is active in many conservation efforts, including serving as Virginia Outreach Coordinator for the National Audubon Society and president of the Friends of Dyke Marsh.*





# HEYDAY TRAPPING TALES

Young friends made  
a lifetime of memories  
learning how to trap.



© F. Eugene Hester

*Raccoons, along with other wild animals such as fox, otter, muskrat and mink, have long been sought after by trappers and hunters. Native Americans and European settlers early on recognized raccoons as an excellent source of food and clothing.*

by Marc Puckett

I have not fur trapped in many years. Growing older brings new responsibilities and interests, and what once was a passion can become a thing of the past. But now and then something happens to blow the dust off old memories. In a workshop I attended a while back, called "Trapping Matters," I learned plenty but also experienced a cascade of memories.

We've heard our parents talk all our lives about the "good old days." It always left me feeling cheated, like I'd somehow been born too late. "Wish you could have been there, boy, the sky was black with ducks." Truthfully speaking, my dad and I enjoyed countless days afield and I don't remember a shortage of game. However, I do not recall feeling like I was part of the "heydays" of anything, either.

My good friends and I trapped through the late seventies and early eighties. We walked trap lines close to home at first, but as soon as we could drive or finagle a ride, we were off to bigger water. We actually took French classes in high school because we dreamed of becoming professional Canadian fur trappers. Just thinking about this brings back





©F Eugene Hester

*Though fur prices are not as high as they were 30 years ago, trapping is still a good way to earn a little extra money. More importantly it's a great way to get exercise while spending time learning more about nature.*



©F Eugene Hester

some of those old emotions. You know the way it felt back when anything seemed possible and worries were few. Don't you remember the flicker of electricity that would run through you while sitting and thinking about these things? The French lessons did not go so well, but the trapping did.

We usually ran lines in pairs. Mostly because we were friends and did nearly everything together, but also for safety, because the New in winter ran fast and cold and of course that is the only way our moms would let us go. My good friend Andy and I ran a driving line that extended on both sides of the New River from just above the Celanese factory near Bluff City all the way to the power plant in Glen Lyn—round trip, 40 miles a day—every day all winter. Lots of gas, yes, but the fur-price-to-gas ratio was much more in our favor then. We trapped every speck of water we could legally get on. Near all the public access points, along road right-of-ways, and anywhere a sympathetic landowner would give us permission. The competition was stiff and we constantly scouted for new places. During peaks we'd have over



100 traps set, mostly Conibears for muskrats.

The whole thing was grand; epic even, in our eyes. Just getting ready to trap each winter was so much fun. I recall every year we'd get together and make our supply lists and send our lure, trap, dye and tag orders to places like the Hawbaker's Trapping Supply Company, or Cronk's Outdoor Supplies. The next best thing to checking traps was waiting for the postal truck to arrive with our order. Our moms cringed, but grudgingly allowed us to boil traps in an old bean pot in the kitchen.

We all subscribed to *Fur-Fish-Game*. Every issue had a hand-painted print for a cover, depicting various aspects of outdoor living. It was the only magazine that actually had a trapping section, with updates on fur prices and the best "how-to" articles. We were self-taught trappers and most of us learned how from that simple black and white publication. The magazine, along with a cloth-bound copy of S. Stanley Hawbak-

er's *Trapping North American Furbearers*, set us free.

Rain or shine, ice or wind, we ran traps after school each day and skinned fur until 8 or 9 o'clock at night. After which homework still waited. We took so much pride in our furs, painfully peeling the hides, fleshing them, then stretching them, first fur side out so that we could actually take a brush through the hair. The basement of my house served as the fur shed. We placed tacks in the joists for hanging stretchers, and by winter's end, half the ceiling was obscured by hides.

Then the big day arrived. The time came to sell our hard earned take. I can close my eyes and still see those stacks of furs, mostly muskrats, but every year a few mink, a few raccoon, and the bragging prize of a fox or two. More than that, I can remember how the furs sounded. They made a crackling noise when they'd been properly handled.

We took our furs to Terry Bryson's Store in Draper. The store

was not much to look at, but Terry liked us and was fair to us, even though we were kids, and he always had a good joke to tell and a grin on his face. He would take each fur and give it a tug and then blow on it to see how it lay. Then he'd grade it. "Number 1, prime; number 2, fair; number 1, extra prime," would ring through his shop. His wife would write down the price on each and at the end he'd give us a grand total. Now and then we'd argue with him a little over a fur, and sometimes he'd actually change a grade for us. My best take was over 70 muskrats, along with 2 minks, 2 foxes, and 3 raccoons. As I recall, the year was 1980 and I made close to \$800—paid in cash.

What I did not know then was that I was part of trapping's "good old days." Each participant in the workshop that day received a packet of information, part of which contained a historical record of Virginia's fur harvest. The data spanned from 1964 until 2004 and included numbers on peak fur prices. The best





years for trapping in Virginia were 1979, 1980, and 1981. During the 1980-81 season, 432,960 furs were sold in the Commonwealth with an estimated present-day value of \$10,599,714. These years were Virginia's heyday peaks in trapping.

I have a daughter now. I don't know if she'll ever trap, but I plan to impart to her a love of the outdoors. I'll teach her that trapping, hunting, and fishing bring us closer to the land than anything else we can do. I'll teach her that food does not come from a box or milk from a jug. I hope she'll see the seriousness, but also the necessity, of death and understand the full circle of life. And she'll learn responsibility, just like we did, as no one made us check those traps. We did it because we knew it was right. Nobody forced us to take pride in those furs; we just did it because that's how we were raised. And no one was watching us while we were in those woods on an evening when we were so tempted to shoot a doe out of season, but did not.



©F Eugene Hester

*Outwitting an elusive muskrat may seem like a waste of time to most people, but for those who have walked a trapline on a cold winter day along the New River or shared in a tale or two of living off the land, the memories that the experience brings last a lifetime.*

It is hard to learn those kinds of lessons on a computer: The results of actions are not so serious. Somehow when a young person holds a squirrel, or a dove, or a muskrat in hand, they begin to see how their actions have consequences, and though enjoyable, the actions are not to be taken lightly.

Someday maybe I'll have a grandkid sitting on my lap and I'll be able to reminisce, "You should have seen that river, so cold that ice packs drifted into shore at night, and running fast, but still clear enough to see a muskrat tunnel. And Andy and I would be out there so long our hands would be like hunks of freezer meat, but we'd be catching muskrats and making money and answering to no one but the weather. And sometimes close to dark the winter air would press down so hard it caught the sound close to the ground and we could hear far off down the river the Norfolk & Western diesel train leav-

ing the Glen Lyn coal depot. That sound always made it seem warmer than it was. I wish you could have been there with us. We'd come to that last trap with barely enough light to see our way down the river bank; we'd have to be so careful as that bank was slick with ice, and one misstep could have sent us down that river for good. Then we'd claw our way back up, often holding a muskrat in one hand, and get that truck moving hard and get that heater rolling steam. We'd grab a pop and some nabs on the way back and talk about the events of the day. That heater would make our frozen faces thaw so fast they'd glow red in the dash lights. And we'd laugh like the carefree kids we were. It was something. It was the good old days." □

*Marc Puckett is the Small Game Project Leader with the Wildlife Division of the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries.*



©Marc Puckett



# Winter N

## Be Wild! Live Wi



*Evening Grosbeak*

story and illustrations  
by Spike Knuth

**E**very few winter seasons, an invasion of birds from the Boreal forests of Canada takes place. These invasions, or "irruptions," are irregular migratory movements of birds seeking food. Most of these birds are seed-eating songbirds but a few are predatory species. Irruptions are not fully understood, but are believed to be caused by a scarcity of winter food offerings over wide areas of the northern forests. These migrations occur mainly in late autumn or early winter and can be very spectacular: Large numbers of birds suddenly appear in areas where they are not normally seen.

One or more species of seed-eating finches will move south, often in large flocks. Those most apt to be

seen in Virginia include pine siskins, red crossbills, white-winged crossbills, evening grosbeaks, and common redpolls. The red-breasted nuthatch, while a common winter resident here, may show up in much larger numbers during an irruption.

These species rely heavily on the seeds of conifers like spruce, hemlock, pines, and tamaracks, as well as hardwoods like alder, birch, ash, and box elder, and the fruits of sumac and hawthorns. Ornithologists believe these irruptions occur due to the failure of seed-bearing trees, forcing the birds to wander southward in search of food. It is believed that this occurs because, in years of good seed production, these seed-eating birds thrive and their populations grow. However, if a year or two of plenty is followed by a seed crop failure or scarcity, the birds are faced with food shortages, forcing them to migrate. A species may show up in large numbers in one area for a short time or may stay around for a good part of winter if food is readily available. Then it will disappear, unlikely or never to be seen again in that area.

A number of predatory species

may also wander southward in winter, including northern goshawks, snowy owls, and rough-legged hawks. These predators feed on small mammals that go through cyclical fluctuations in their populations. Studies reveal that small tundra and grassland rodents go through 4-year population cycles, while snowshoe hares go through 10-year cycles linked to the interaction between predation and food supply. When population crashes occur, many avian predators are forced out, to more southerly climes. Very likely the raptors, like the seed-eating finches, flourish during population explosions, but when the crash comes they also have to seek a new food supply.

Other birds that are occasionally found in the northern or mountainous regions of Virginia during winter



*Pine Siskin*



# omads

## ! Grow Wild!



may increase in numbers during irruptions. Rare sightings of northern shrikes, northern goshawks, and rough-legged hawks occur.

### Evening Grosbeak (*Coccothraustes vespertinus*)

The evening grosbeak stands out because of its distinctive deep yellows, rich browns, black wings and tail, large white wing patches, black cap, yellow eye stripe, and large pale bill. The female appears more grayish, overall, with black wings and white patches and only a touch of yellow on its flanks.

These gregarious birds are 7 to 8 1/2 inches long, and they commonly appear suddenly at backyard feeders—usually in large, active, noisy flocks—devouring sunflower seeds at prodigious rates. While feeding,

they constantly utter their “peer” call, or a double-noted chirping “dee-ip,” somewhat similar to the house sparrow’s call. If the feeder is kept stocked each day they’ll keep coming back, but when the food runs out, they leave as fast as they appeared.

Their natural foods include tree buds, wild fruits, box elder and ash seeds, as well as a variety of conifer seeds. They also consume salt and are often drawn to salt treated highway edges in winter. Their irruptions sometimes carry flocks as far as the Gulf Coast.

### Pine Siskin (*Carduelis pinus*)

While they are naturally found wintering in Virginia, pine siskins show up in larger numbers during an irruption. Some flocks may swell to 200 birds. Often in the company of goldfinches, they will come readily to backyard tube-type feeders to feed on niger (thistle) seed.

Measuring about 5 inches, both sexes are heavily streaked with brown and buffy white and with yellow wing and tail markings. The



Red Crossbill

male shows more yellow. The tail is deeply forked and the bill is conical, but sharper and narrower than other finches. The call of the pine siskin is often likened to that of a hoarse goldfinch—a penetrating “zee-e-em” note that rises in pitch and intensity at the end.

Siskins are fond of alder, birch, and hemlock seeds, but will also go to fields and gardens to feed on the seeds of grasses, flowers, and shrubs.

### Red Crossbill (*Loxia curvirostra*)

At first glance it looks like the crossbill’s bill is deformed, because its mandibles are crossed. But, in fact, nature has designed it perfectly to feed as it does. It inserts its bill into the scale of a pine cone, then opens its bill to pry apart the scale, enabling its barbed tongue to pluck out the seed.

The red crossbill has a variety of plumages, but usually exhibits a dull red with a brighter red rump patch and dusky wings and tail. The female is dull green or grayish-olive. This



bird breeds erratically at almost any time of the year. About eight different types or sub-species have been identified throughout the continent, which are of different sizes and range from six to eight inches.

Seeds of spruce, pine, hemlock, and firs are favored. Red crossbills wander in flocks of about 10–30 birds, feeding high in the tops of trees uttering their chattering “peeping” calls like chickens. Their flight call is a “kep-kep-kep.”

## White-winged Crossbill

(*Loxia leucoptera*)

The white-winged crossbill is found farther north than most other northern breeding finches. It is 6 to 6 ¾ inches long and is a much rosier red than the red crossbill. It has two prominent white wing bars on black or dusky wings. The female is olive-gray with a yellowish rump.

White-wings favor the seeds of fir, spruce, and hemlock. They feed high in the trees often hanging upside down and in all kinds of positions at the ends of branches—much like parrots—as they feed. Their calls are soft and musical peeps or canary-like sounds. They generally do not mix with other species.

## Common Redpoll

(*Carduelis flammea*)

This hardy little bird is about 5 ¼ inches long with a small yellow bill. It is dusky brown overall with paler streaks, a distinctive red cap, two paler wing bars and a black chin and



Common Redpolls

eye patch. The male’s breast has a tinge of red.

Redpolls travel in flocks of about 20 to 30, feeding high in the trees on birch, alder, tamarack, and arbor vitae. They are very active and hang from branches parrot-like as they feed. Often they’ll suddenly fly to the ground to pick up seeds that have fallen.

## Purple Finch

(*Carpodacus purpureus*)

Measuring 6 ¼ inches, the purple finch is similar to the now common house finch, except it is more pinkish-purple to deeper red than the house finch, with a whitish belly. The female is olive-gray above and white below, with heavy streaking. The tail is deeply forked and it has a thick, heavy bill.

The purple finch is another bird that winters regularly in Virginia but expands in numbers during irruptions.



White-winged Crossbill



Purple Finch





*Red-breasted Nuthatch*

They fly in flocks of 12 to 40 birds and feed on various seeds and wild fruits. Their call is a sharp "pip" or "chip-chee" in flight. Their song is rapid and melodious.

## Red-breasted Nuthatch

*(Sitta canadensis)*

This little ball of energy measures only 4 ½ to 4 ¾ inches. Its black and white striped facial pattern is distinctive, its breast and belly, light reddish-brown. Its bill is straight, thin, and pointed.

The red-breasted nuthatch is another bird found during winter in Virginia that increases in numbers when others are forced south during irruptions. It can move nimbly up and down tree trunks head first or hang upside down as it feeds on seeds of conifers, sweet gum, and others. It will store seeds by pounding them into the crevices of tree bark. The call of the red-breast is a nasal "ahnk" or "auk-auk-auk," uttered rapidly. It is quick, active, and bold, seemingly unafraid of humans.

## Snowy Owl

*(Bubo scandiacus)*

This "ghost owl" measures 20 to 27 inches. It is basically all white but with dark dusky to black barring on its back, breast, and wings. Young birds are the most heavily marked and are often sooty-gray during their first year. Females are larger and more heavily marked than males.

In flight they appear stocky and neckless with a round head. They fly with an irregular wing beat that is quicker on the upbeat than on the down stroke, and interrupted by sailing.

This owl is diurnal, active and feeding all day. It is a bird of the tun-

dra regions and other open landscapes. As it moves south it favors dunes of coastal beaches, lake shores, marshes, large farm fields, and grasslands.

The snowy owl hunts from lookout perches such as posts, knolls, boulders, ice heaves, and old buildings. In Canada, snowshoe hares, ptarmigans, and lemmings form their primary diet, but during irruptions south, they feed on rabbits, voles, ducks, grebes, wounded game, and fish. □

*Spike Knuth is an avid naturalist and wildlife artist. For over 30 years his artwork and writing have appeared in Virginia Wildlife. Spike is also a member of the Virginia Outdoor Writers Association.*

**Be Wild! Live Wild! Grow Wild!** is a regular feature that highlights Virginia's Wildlife Action Plan, which is designed to unite natural resources agencies, sportsmen and women, conservationists and citizens in a common vision for the conservation of the Commonwealth's wildlife and habitats in which they live. To learn more or to become involved with this new program visit: [bewildvirginia.org](http://bewildvirginia.org).



*Snowy Owl*





DGIF's Conservation Police Officer Daniel Ross and students examine mast.

## *Students at Eureka Elementary discover that one path leads to another.*

story and photos by Gail Brown

**T**he kids in Eureka Elementary School's Ecology Club weren't looking for hidden trails or buried treasures that Saturday morning. It was a Christmas tree they wanted—a small one that the club could carry in the town parade, preferably one being crowded out by the dense overgrowth in the woods behind their school. What they found changed their mission, changed their club, and continues to change the way they do things at this Charlotte County school. But the story doesn't begin here; it started months earlier

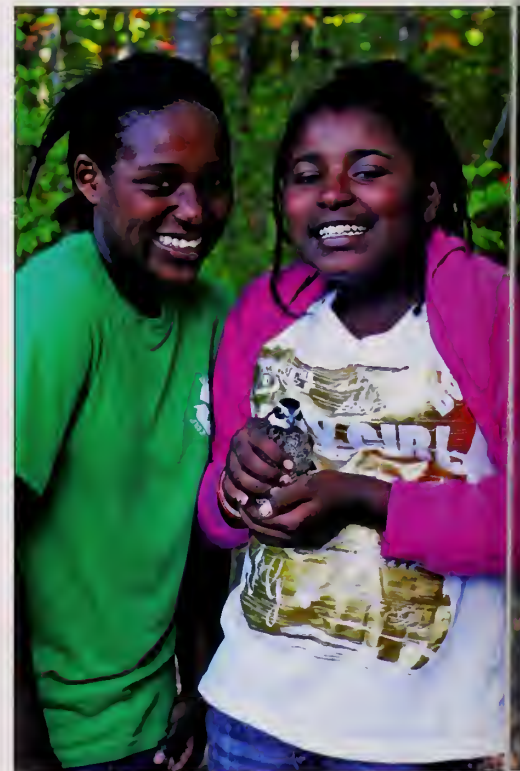
when speech pathologist Liz Peaden noticed how excited the students were just to get outside and simply plant a tree.

"The planting was part of our Jamestown celebration," said Peaden. "I'd been thinking about how much the schoolyard needed to be revitalized, and after seeing how happy the kids were to be outside planting, I just got the idea to form an environmental club and give them more of that opportunity." That "eureka moment" led to a grant for \$2,000 from the Virginia Environmental Endowment, the formation of Eureka's Ecology Club, and the discovery of a hidden nature trail, a lost exercise trail, and various discarded treasures from other lifetimes.

"We started meeting in November, 2007, and had just agreed on our first project—planting a garden—when the kids decided they wanted to look for their tree. That's when we

found the trail. It was very overgrown, but you could definitely see part of a carved-out path leading into the woods." Over the past decade, nature's bullies like Gustav, Isabel, and Fran had made the woods their private playground, blocking entrance to others and heaping trees into piles with the abandon of backpacks tossed carelessly in a schoolyard. After promising to proceed with caution, the kids immediately leapt and scampered over a tangle of limbs and vines. Not deterred by what they faced, these fearless adventurers stood and declared the nature trail "their" project.

In order to make the trail safe for deeper exploration, the ecology club turned to parent and community volunteers who generously donated



Carefully releasing the quail is part of the project.



# to Stewardship

equipment, gasoline, and numerous hours of hard labor to remove trees and identify and cut back potentially dangerous limbs. Each weekend, after clearing more of the trail, the kids continued to explore the tree line, soon finding three different entrances and 25 markers identifying particular trees and plants.

Throughout the year, following a hearty breakfast of pancakes and juice, Eureka's young environmentalists planted trees, created gardens, picked up trash, and continued their work in the woods—always looking to nature for clues to help them locate missing parts of the trail or interesting things to study. Amber especially liked the mornings that included presentations by volunteers such as Melissa Early, a recent college graduate who spoke to the club about preserving the forest as a habitat for birds. Parent Larry Newcomb presented a lesson about bobwhite quail and provided the eggs, incubators, and feed so club members could raise and release quail, an exceptional project even for a Virginia Naturally school.

By the time the kids were ready to move on to middle school, the nature trail was fully uncovered and parts of a different trail, a long-lost exercise trail, were rediscovered by the group! Newly unearthed dump sites gave up some secrets as well, offering up an icebox, some brown glass bottles, and an old tire which the kids rolled out of the woods to reuse as a protective bumper around their Jamestown dogwood.

While the first ecology club was small, about 10 active members, this year's club has grown to over 30 students all eager to do their part to help the environment. Their enthusiasm has trickled down to their younger



*An artistic parent created signs for all entrances to the nature trail.*



*Members of the Ecology Club work in teams to identify the trees along their nature trail.*





*Paying attention to detail, taking notes, and using field guides help to ensure accuracy.*



*Look what can happen to our rivers!*

siblings, thanks in part to the dedication of educators like first grade teacher Sandy Flynn. Flynn, not content to let her students study outside only some of the time, has set up a campsite *inside* her classroom. There, students can snuggle around the campfire to do their work or earn

reading privileges in the tent that beckons from across the room.

Flynn, like Peaden, brings in experts from the field, such as Southside Soil and Water Conservation District educator Julie Hamlett, to help teach lessons about environmental stewardship. If the squeals

and looks on the faces of the students are any indication, it could be said that Hamlett's lesson on water pollution is especially exciting. Enthusiasm exploded as students, playing the role of industry, homeowner, farmer, and picnicker, left their mark on the "river," leading Hannah to gasp: "I'm afraid of what it's going to look like!"

Hamlett was also instrumental in helping Peaden successfully apply for a Virginia Environmental Endowment Grant. Funds from the grant helped the school purchase the trees, plants, and equipment needed by the ecology club to complete their many projects, which included creating a natural buffer to solve an erosion problem. "The grant made, and continues to make, all the difference in our stewardship efforts," said Peaden.

Anne Payne, PTO president at the time the nature trail was created, recently walked the property with her sister in an effort to locate the exercise trail. While remnants from a few fitness stations have been uncovered, nature is struggling to keep most of the trail a secret. "I'm so excited to see the kids outdoors and learning to appreciate these beautiful woods," said Payne. "Not every



*Forester Miller Adams encourages students to look carefully at different trees and plants to discover clues about the forest's history.*





*A classroom "campsite" is an ideal place to share ideas about how we can help the environment.*

school has such an ideal site and we need to use it." Payne also noticed a persimmon tree and couldn't help commenting, "That fruit is bitter now, but after the first frost it will make a delicious jelly and pudding"—proving once again that although it's challenging to work outside, there

are also great rewards in recognizing nature's bounty!

Recently, Peaden was excited to notice area high schools using the trail for the Federation FFA forestry judging event, an event that included tree identification. What further benefits will emerge as a result of the stu-

dents' efforts to promote this natural treasure have yet to be determined; all indicators, however, point to increased good for the greater community.

If you ask the kids what they think about their new club and civic involvement, they will give you myriad reasons why so many are willing to sacrifice their Saturday mornings to hard work. Perhaps Chandler's words sum it up best: "The reason I liked helping out at the ecology club is because it feels good to make a difference at our school," which prompted William to add, "We also learned how to cook a few pancakes here and there."

As all students have learned, no one knows where they will wind up when they start down a path they haven't walked before, but one thing's for sure at Eureka: Saturday mornings will never be the same again. □

*Gail Brown is a retired principal for Chesterfield County Public Schools. She is a lifelong learner and educator, and her teaching and administrative experiences in grades K-12 have taught her that project-based environmental programs teach science standards, promote core values, and provide exciting educational experiences for the entire community.*



*Parent Larry Newcomb donated quail eggs, incubators, and feed so that students could raise and release quail.*



*Was the project a success? Just look at that smile.*





# The Sporting Life of Carol Lueder

*Books, Birds, and  
Doing Business the  
Old Fashioned Way.*

by Beth Hester

"In all our encounters with businesses and shops, we now half expect to be treated not as customers, but as system trainees who haven't quite got the hang of it yet."

— Lynne Truss, *Talk to the Hand*

**W**e live in an online world where collectors can buy or sell virtually any object by way of numerous Internet auctions. This system may work out just fine for those whose passion is accumulating Pez dispensers from the 1960s, or for the type of person who bids on misshapen potatoes resembling Elvis. Where, then, can the earnest collector of fine sporting books and art turn for sage advice and a civil transaction?

Enter Carol Lueder of Fair Chase Books, Inc. Since 1982, Carol has been in the mail order book business, specializing in new and antiquarian books with hunting, shooting and adventure themes. Located in Lexington, Virginia, and armed with a piquant sense of humor, Carol has the expertise to help collectors find volumes old and new. Need to replace that early edition of *Eastern Upland Shooting* that your puppy just demolished? Dying for an autographed copy of *Gunning the Eastern Uplands*? Carol will incline her ear to your plea and provide you with the kind of personalized customer service that is extremely rare in our self-service world.

"I love what I do," she said. "A good book dealer should have a passion and reverence for their books, and a willingness to develop a rapport with their customers ... I find

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Carol Lueder operates Fair Chase out of Lexington but often exhibits at sportsman events throughout the region.

that meeting potential clients is satisfying to me, and reassuring to them. After all these years I still get a rush when I'm able to locate a scarce book for someone."

Carol grew up in a Chicago suburb where she nurtured a passion for horses and trail riding. An interest in exploring the wildlife that she encountered led to the purchase of field guides and books on duck hunting. Like most bibliophiles, one book led

to another until, as Carol described it, "I had a vast quantity of books without much quality." Carol eventually established a career in advertising, but the book goddess wouldn't leave her alone, and opportunity came knocking twice: Carol purchased an estate of hunting books which allowed her to create her first *Fair Chase* catalog. Then, when a friendly competitor took early retirement, Carol was able to purchase his inventory

and mailing list. She also began to do more traveling, taking Fair Chase Books to shows and side-by-side events across the country.

Carol, who is an avid upland bird hunter and side-by-side aficionado, comes to Virginia by way of Wisconsin. She considered moving out west to be near her daughter Liz, who is a three-time, All American sporting clays competitor, but found that Cody, Wyoming, wasn't quite the place to run her business. Undaunted, Carol opened up a map of the U.S. and highlighted all of the places where she had attended shows and side-by-side events. Then, Carol said, "I squinted, and put my finger in the middle of the highlighted areas ... and that's how I ended up in Lexington, Virginia."

We are fortunate to have a resource like Carol who is an expert in her field, and she has some good advice for readers of *Virginia Wildlife* who may be interested in starting their own collections of sporting books.

"There is a lot of misinformation and fraudulent advertising on the Internet, so you have to be wary. There is also the perception that working with a specialist dealer is more expensive than buying a volume from an online auction, but this isn't always the case. Sure, inexperienced buyers and sellers may find what they *think* is a good buy at a church bazaar or a yard sale, and sometimes you may get a bargain, but will you really know about the end page that is missing, or the jam smudge on the corner? If something is defective, what kind of recourse will you have? How much time and trouble will it take to remedy the situation? Also, shipping charges are an important factor, and can easily jack up the price of a book."

Carol says the best guidance is to develop a relationship with your book dealer. "Find a dealer with whom you feel comfortable. Investigate what your options are if the book you purchase has been wrongly described."



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## Carol Lueder Sightings

In addition to her mail order business, Carol also has permanent displays in Virginia at The Homestead Shooting Club in Hot Springs and Duke's Antique Center in Lexington. She also attends a number of events throughout the year. Her upcoming schedule in 2009, also available at her Web site [www.fchase.net](http://www.fchase.net), is:

### January 2-4:

East Coast Fine Arms Show,  
Hyatt Regency, Greenwich, CT.  
Carole, (914) 248-1000.

### April 24-26:

Southern Side-by-Side Spring Classic,  
Deep River Sporting Clays,  
Sanford, NC. Call (919) 774-7080 for  
details or go to [www.deepriver.net](http://www.deepriver.net).

### May 15-17:

North/South Side-by-Side Champion-  
ship, The Homestead, Hot Springs, VA.

### June 5-7:

American Side-by-Side Classic. Haus-  
mann's Hidden Hollow, near Lawton, PA.  
Call (908) 719-9797 or (570) 934-2336  
for details or go to [www.hhhsc.net](http://www.hhhsc.net).

### September 11-13:

Game Conservancy Showcase.  
Hudson Farm, Stanhope, NJ.

Additional resources for the collector:  
The Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh  
contains many good references and links  
for anyone interested in doing more  
research on their own:  
[www.carnegielibrary.org](http://www.carnegielibrary.org).

Over the years, Carol has dealt with all kinds of clients, from check-book participants who buy for investment purposes, as well as those who are striving to build a collection of books on subjects close to their hearts such as deer, turkey, or waterfowl. And, as Carol said, "If money is not an object, you can collect almost anything."

Carol also has a simple tip to help you care for your collection of beloved volumes: "The types of paper and glue used in the manufacture of books have a lot to do with deterioration, but there are some things you can do. Proper storage is important. Sunlight and humidity are a book's worst enemy. Take your paperbacks to the cabin, and leave the first editions at home!"

What about her own book collection? What books and authors resonate? "*Dangerous River*, written by R.M. Patterson about his adventures in northwest Canada is a really wonderful book that gives you the opportunity to immerse yourself in another time." Also, anything by Archibald Rutledge. "He was not just a hunter, but a great outdoorsman."

Carol also recommends the 'Sisters of the Hunt' series put out by Stackpole Books, especially the volume, *Trails of Enchantment*, which was first published in 1930 by Paulina Brandreth under the pseudonym Paul. It is considered by many to be one of the best books ever written about white-tailed deer and deer

hunting. Finally, Carol has a fondness for many of the classic southern storytellers, like Nash Buckingham and Havilah Babcock.

In her incarnation as an upland bird hunter, Carol has close ties to the fair chase hunting ethic from which she derived the name of her business. When she decided to shoot seriously, she wanted to learn from a hunter, rather than from a shooting instructor. "I knew that learning from a hunter would take into account many ethical questions, with the emphasis on the experience rather than the kill. A shooting instructor wants you to kill as many targets as possible. A good hunter teaches you to kill efficiently. Both disciplines require accuracy, but I want to be accurate to minimize pain or wounding." Carol also enjoys the camaraderie of bird hunting and the enjoyment of nature as an end in itself.

Carol learned to shoot with a 20 gauge Citori Superlight O/U. As she became more confident, she purchased an Italian side-by-side, a Zanotti, also in 20 bore. "I love shooting my Zanotti, she said. "It's light and accurate ... too tightly choked for sporting clays, but really gives you a thrill when you do reduce a clay to dust! It's really choked for pheasant and grouse in northern Wisconsin."

For Carol, the love of hunting and shooting continues to grow, and her book business has evolved over the years into a full-time job. Carol said simply, "I participate in lots of events with my books and guns, and I love every minute spent reading and shooting."

You may contact Carol Lueder at Fair Chase Books, Inc. by email or by phone: [fchase@localnet.com](mailto:fchase@localnet.com), or 1-540-463-9189. Your request will be handled professionally and your purchase, meticulously packaged and shipped in a timely manner: a genuinely satisfying, old fashioned business encounter. □

Beth Hester is a writer and freelance photographer. When not hunched over her laptop, she pursues other passions: reading, shooting, kayaking, fishing, tying saltwater flies, and tending her herb garden. She lives in Portsmouth.



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# Journal

## 2009 Outdoor Calendar of Events

For current information and registration on workshops go to the "Upcoming Events" page on the Department's Web site at [www.HuntFishVA.com](http://www.HuntFishVA.com) or call 804-367-7800.

**January 3:** Youth Waterfowl Hunting Workshop, Chance, Va.

**January 3:** Firearms season closes for bear, deer and turkey. Late archery and late muzzleloading deer seasons close.

**January 16-18:** The Richmond Fishing Expo, Richmond Raceway Complex. For more information: [www.ncboat-shows.com](http://www.ncboat-shows.com).

**January 31:** Quail and squirrel seasons close

**February 14:** Grouse season closes.

**February 28:** Rabbit season closes. □



by Beth Hester

*A Gentleman's Shooting Dog: The Evolution of the Legendary Ryman Setter*  
by John D. Taylor  
Bonasa Press  
ISBN: 0-972594-9-3  
Hardcover, with gallery of photographs

*"At the core of the DeCoverly setter is more than a century of selective breeding for natural hunting instincts. These instincts are comprised of scenting ability, intelligence to learn how to handle birds, and pointing instinct ... we do not want a dog to stand there like a well-trained fool. His job is to set the bird up for the gun. Our job is to expose him to birds and to let him learn his craft."*

—The DeCoverly Kennels

Nothing is more boring than a sporting author who sticks to the subject. The books we remember are those that meander about within an author's emotional and intellectual landscape. No matter how technical the subject, the central themes are best explored obliquely, alongside odd detours and side roads. This book veers off ... in a good way.

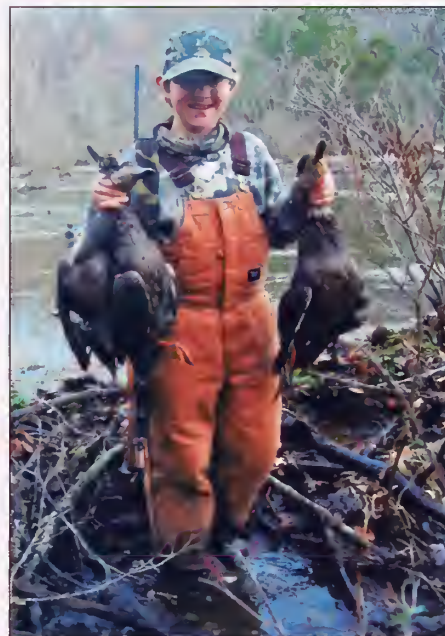
Author John D. Taylor has hunted upland bird in the mid-Atlantic region for over thirty years. Long a devotee of the Ryman English setter, he explores the evolution of this calm and intelligent breed, profiling the long line of dedicated individuals who have guided it for over a century. The dogs possess a finely-tuned and efficient combination of fluid athleticism and hunting instinct. In an age of shortcuts and murky ideals, Taylor describes the efforts of The DeCoverly Kennels. Avid about improving the health of the line, and maintaining high standards, they have lovingly cultivated the qualities that make the Ryman setter the perfect partner at home, on the bench, and in the field.

The back story to Taylor's search for the perfect gun dog is a more personal narrative: his lifelong quest to discover deep down what it really means to be a hunter, an ethical sportsman, and a gentleman. These engaging detours merge with investigations into the history of human beings as hunters, the dogs that eventually became their allies, the roots of the English setter, and finally, what the future might hold for the gentleman (and ... one might add here, gentlewoman) and his or her hunting dog.

In the end, Taylor concludes that true sportsmanship in the field is a series of discoveries: "The sum of thirty-three gunning seasons tells me the root of true gentlemanship afield is a strong sense of self-knowledge cou-

pled with an equally strong and healthy respect for wildlife and the natural world. In the end, I believe it boils down to setting your own standards and rising to them." □

## Outdoor Kids



Scott Hammond of West Point, Virginia, proudly displays ducks harvested with his grandfather on a wintry day last January. From the look on his face, Scott is not thinking about his cold, wet feet. Congratulations, Scott.

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Sally Mills



### Wood Duck Stewards

Thanks to agriculture and shop teacher Howard Hill and his students, our Hog Island Wildlife Management Area (WMA) has experienced no shortage of wood ducks. For over ten years, Mr. Hill has incorporated the building of duck nesting boxes into his curriculum.

Hill began this partnership with the DGIF at the request of WMA staff Donald Hayes. The annual tradition teaches King William High School students important construction skills while giving back to the community and, specifically, supporting healthy wood duck populations.

Several students in this class hunt deer, and a few enjoy duck hunting on the Mataponi River nearby. Many also are members of "Future Farmers of America."

When asked about their motivations for participating, one student quipped, "Building and making things is fun and much better than just sitting in class." Another echoed that working with wood was much more enjoyable than book work. The kids even organize fund-raising efforts to pay for all materials involved.



*Find Game* is an interactive Web-based map viewer designed by the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries to provide better and more current information about hunting land location and access in Virginia. *Find Game* allows users to map hunting areas by location and/or by game species, along with hunting quality by species, land manager contact information, site description, facilities available, access information and associated Web links. To learn more about *Find Game* visit : [www.HuntFishVA.com/hunting/findgame](http://www.HuntFishVA.com/hunting/findgame).

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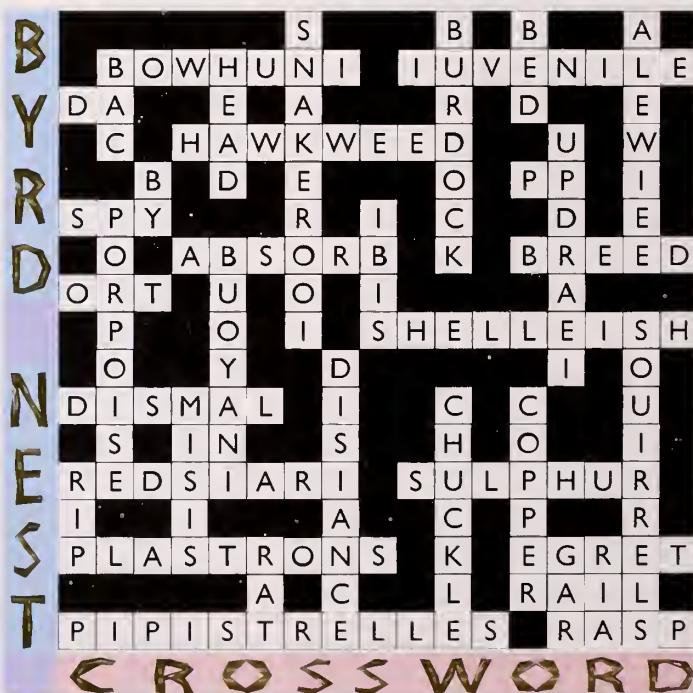
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Answers to  
the December  
2008  
"Byrd Nest"  
Crossword  
Puzzle





# A Duck Hunter's Journal

by Tee Clarkson

January 2nd, 2008

January has finally arrived, usually the best month for a duck hunter in Virginia. By this point, most of the small waters to the north are locked solid in ice and the birds have no choice but to head south. So we wait, we Virginians, in the marshes and by the beaver ponds for the big migrations of mallards, black ducks, teal, and pintails. At least that is the way we hope it happens.

The second day in January looked to be the most promising of the season to that point. The tides were perfect in a marsh I hunt with a friend. The forecast called for strong winds out of the north, a wind chill in the teens, and a chance of snow showers: perfect duck hunting weather.

So as not to wake my two young children and wife, I am generally relegated to sleeping on the couch if I am getting up early to hunt. I don't mind. It certainly beats the repercussions of waking them. That morning I woke quickly and quietly, poured a cup of coffee, and filled my thermos. I was halfway down the walk when I heard my wife call from the door. This couldn't be good, I knew.

"I think I have the flu," she said. I turned to head back, the flag on the front of the house blowing sideways in the promised north wind. I wasn't two steps into the house before she ran to the bathroom and got sick. This definitely was not good. She emerged a few minutes later and must have sensed the worry on my face. I am not proud to admit that I might have been more concerned about my duck hunt than the fact that she had the flu. To my amazement, she told me to go ahead and go.

Only a short drive to my friend's house, I was there in just a few minutes. But it was long enough to come to my senses. He was loading a decoy bag into the boat when I arrived and told him I wouldn't be making the trip, that I would rather live to hunt another day. In a few minutes I was back at home, tending to my wife. He called later that morning. The birds were everywhere. The best morning in the marsh he had seen in two years.

January turned out to be a pretty good month. There were days with decent bags and some without. Most could have been better, but as my brother says, "If my aunt had a beard she would be my uncle."

Finally it arrived, the last day of the season. I hunted in the morning and saw quite a few ducks but was in the wrong spot. There was still the afternoon. A buddy invited me to a marsh where he and some friends had been wearing out the ducks all season. They generally let it rest in the afternoon, but since this was the last day, we would hunt it.

When we arrived around 3, wood ducks were already flying everywhere. I had never seen anything like it: There were hundreds, zipping this way and that throughout the swamp.

I had a modified choke and number 2's, the wrong loads and choke for this type of shooting. Eventually, however, I had my two wood ducks.

"You spent some money on those birds," my buddy joked.

The big ducks didn't show until after shooting time. When they did the sky was black with mallards, teal, widgeon, and black ducks. Reluctantly, we picked up the last of the decoys, unloaded the guns for the last time of the season, and made our last march through a marsh back to the truck. When we got there, two other hunters were waiting. We stood and watched as the birds circled and dropped into the marsh. We listened as the hen mallards quacked loudly on the water, signaling that it was safe. The calls seemed strangely louder, like they, too, knew it was over. For ten minutes no one spoke; we just watched and listened until the last of the birds had lit in the marsh.

"Well, I guess that's it," one of the guys said, finally.

"Yep. I guess that's it."







by Ken and Maria Perrotte

## Dining In

### Hearty Venison Pot Roast

**A**re you looking for a crowd pleasing wild game dish that'll be even better when served as leftovers as it was the first time it was ladled from the pot? Look no further. Dig out those venison roasts some consider marginal in terms of table fare and get rolling on a "Hearty Venison Pot Roast."

This is an easy, all-in-one dish—actually more of a cross between a pot roast and a stew. Add hot yeast rolls for a complete meal.

This recipe can be doubled or halved. Exact measurements aren't necessary. Add more or less of any ingredient to suit your taste. Other favored vegetables may be substituted. Cook the stew for a long time—until the meat is fork-tender. We bone out the entire deer we take and this is a meal tailor-made for those cuts of venison that aren't the best on the grill. The sirloins in the hind quarters and the front shoulder roasts are excellent for this dish.

This is an excellent meal to prepare in advance. It often benefits from a day in the fridge and can be reheated in the microwave. It also freezes well.

Because the timing isn't critical, it's easy to prepare while watching football playoffs or playing in the snow. We often cook pot roast on the weekend when the kids and grandkids are visiting. We make a huge batch using whatever vegetables we have on hand and freeze leftovers for a quick meal or two during the week. We recently served this dish to 25 hungry men at a hunting camp. One young man remarked, as he ladled up a third serving, that he hadn't had such a good stew since his grandmother passed away.

#### Hearty Venison Pot Roast

- 3 or 4 pounds of boneless venison (sirloin or shoulder roasts are ideal for this)
- Garlic pepper seasoning
- ½ large onion, sliced
- 1 cup sliced mushrooms
- 1 can (14.5 oz) whole, sliced, or diced tomatoes (if using fresh, add one 5.5oz can of tomato juice or V8)
- ½ teaspoon thyme
- 1 teaspoon marjoram
- 2 bay leaves

- ½ cup red wine (use a cheap cabernet/drink the good ones)
- 2 teaspoons Worcestershire sauce
- 2 cups beef broth (reduced salt is good)
- 3 or 4 medium potatoes, cut into 1½ to 2 inch cubes
- 1½ cups sliced or baby carrots
- 1 bag frozen green beans (canned is OK)
- 1 tablespoon cornstarch

Cut roast into two or three-inch cubes, season lightly with garlic pepper, and place in large roasting pan. (Cooking spray makes clean up easier.) Slice onion and add to pan. Add mushrooms, tomatoes, seasonings, wine, Worcestershire and broth. Cover pan with top or aluminum foil. Roast at 325 degrees for about 3 hours. Add potatoes and carrots, re-cover and continue cooking for about 45 minutes. By now, the meat should be tender. Add green beans, re-cover and cook another half hour. Remove from oven and discard bay leaves. In a small glass, mix cornstarch with about 2 tablespoons cold water. While juices are still piping hot, move meat and vegetables to one side, tilting if necessary to expose liquids in pan. Stir cornstarch into hot liquids to thicken. Makes 8 to 10 servings.

**Wine Pairing:** Try a cabernet franc, such as the 2005 and 2006 offerings from Rockbridge Vineyard or Ingleside Vineyards. We've also served it with homemade chambourcin and a good vintage chambourcin or blend could match well. □

*About our wild game cooking columnists:* Maria and Ken Perrotte live in the far eastern edge of King George County, the gateway to the historic Northern Neck. Many a skeptic about eating wild game has become a convert after sharing a meal with them. The recipes they'll share in the coming months will reflect fish and game popular in and around Virginia. Occasionally, a guest professional chef may be spotlighted when Ken and Maria discover a unique or particularly creative way of preparing a dish. Color photos depicting the finished dish will also accompany most columns.

Maria and Ken share a love for the outdoors—fishing, hunting or just enjoying crisp autumn mornings or sunny spring afternoons. Ken has also been the longtime outdoors columnist for the Fredericksburg Free Lance-Star newspaper.

Many of the recipes will stress simple, flexible preparation. Dining on fish and game you've caught and are sharing with family and friends is one of the greatest rewards of time spent afield. They'll also be suggesting Virginia wine and, on occasion, ale pairings with various dishes.

So, let's get cooking!



# Photo Tips

by Lynda Richardson

## Trout and About, Fishing With Your Digital Camera

Nothing is more beautiful, or enjoyable, than fishing for trout among snow-covered boulders in an ice rimmed stream lined with evergreens! As you head for the trout streams this winter, be sure to take along your trusty digital camera.

When planning your fishing adventure here are some images that you might want to keep in mind. First, you should always take a few shots of the angler with his or her catch. Normally this is accomplished by having the angler kneel or stand holding the fish "belly to the ground" with lure in mouth. Including the rod and reel in the shot will tell even more of the story. A few things to remember: Make sure you have a nice background behind the subject; have the angler remove his sunglasses so you can see his eyes; and make sure you're close enough that you can actually see the fish! Don't be afraid to shoot a head and shoulders shot instead of a full-length shot. Also, make sure any hat isn't covering or shading his eyes. I use a flash a lot outdoors to fill in shadows under hats.

Capturing action can be challenging, but it offers a chance to catch the angler's graceful (or not so graceful) cast, or a trout leaping out of the water. High shutter speeds (1/500th and up) will help you stop the action. Think about photographing the release of the fish or some images of it placed carefully on a stream bank. Here you need to select a background that makes the fish stand out. Dried or green grass, pebbles, and sand all make nice backgrounds. Consider taking macro shots of the fish's head, or eyes, or the spotted texture of its skin, or even a close-up of the lure in its mouth. But be quick about it! If you're not going to eat the fish for dinner, you want to get it back into the water, unharmed, as soon as possible!



*"None of my angling buddies was close enough to get a picture of me with this brown trout, so I pulled my Canon G9 digital camera out of my vest pocket and snapped a few as I was bringing it in. (Love that auto-focus!) You can probably tell that I had the flash on, which added the sparkle to the water." © 2008 Lynda Richardson*

Why not take some photographs of the landscape you're enjoying? A picture of that stream flanked by ice will definitely remind you of how cold and beautiful it was. Some digital cameras have a panoramic feature that is particularly fun for capturing scenery. Also, challenge yourself to use all of the focal lengths your cam-

era offers. Wide angles, telephoto, and macro images will add interest to your collection of photographs.

On your next trout fishing trip this winter, why not stick a digital camera in your vest pocket and tell the story of your trip in pictures? If the fishing is slow, at least you can catch some "keeper" photographs! □

You are invited to submit one to five of your best photographs to "Image of the Month," Virginia Wildlife Magazine, P.O. Box 11104, 4010 West Broad Street, Richmond, VA 23230-1104. Send original slides, super high-quality prints, or high-res 360 dpi jpeg files on disk and include a self-addressed, stamped envelope or other shipping method for return. Also, please include any pertinent information regarding how and where you captured the image and what camera and settings you used, along with your phone number. We look forward to seeing and sharing your work with the readers of *Virginia Wildlife*!

## Image of the Month



*Congratulations go to Dan Boxberger of Wytheville for his photograph of some unusual visitors: red crossbills! Red crossbills are a species of special concern here in Virginia (see p. 19). This time last year, Dan photographed as the birds chowed down for up to an hour at a time at his feeders. Great spotting, Dan! Thank you for sharing this wonderful find.*





# Talking Stick

by Sally Mills

*"We treat this world of ours  
as though we had a spare  
in the trunk."*

This was the message scripted on a slip of paper curled inside my last fortune cookie. Wallop!

In considering how to approach the first in a series of editorials, my mind has circled back to this simple, 15-word dictum over and over again. What strikes me about it, among other things, is its direct and universal blame. Or perhaps, to be more magnanimous to the author, a universal call to arms, a universal plea to take responsibility.

The notion of individuals taking personal responsibility for their behavior is creeping into all segments of public dialogue these days: from managing our finances to choosing healthier foods. One place it has yet to fully gain traction, however, is in our conversation about climate change. Feels like we are clinging to the idea that "governments" should lead the charge and that, somehow, "they" can fix the problems that ail our wobbly world. We're still tempted to point fingers at everyone but ourselves.

At a recent meeting to discuss how Virginians should plan for the effects of global warming upon wildlife and to better define both the issues and the people who should be coordinating with each other, I was reminded once again that genuine progress is taking place. The conversation about climate change is moving forward in Virginia. But by habit, we government types often slip into familiar modes of doing business: trying to figure out how to effectively get our message out to the "interested public" in order that we might chip away at consensus building.

Yes, we in the business of wildlife management do need to be heard. But we need to deliver our message at a faster tempo, at a much higher volume. The challenge of planning for wildlife adaptations and migrations in the wake of rising temperatures and lost habitats would be daunting to consider under any circumstances. That we face this challenge with a narrower window of opportunity to act can make the beat of consensus building feel a tad too slow.

So while we hook arms with old friends—hunters, biologists, GIS techies, trout fishermen, school teachers, and others—in the choir loft, we must quickly invite new friends to join us. Surely, it's going to take all the friends we've got.

My instincts: We will succeed only if we stop framing the conversation in terms of "they" and "them." Like many other things facing Americans right now, the time has come to roll up our sleeves, to search for every square inch of common ground between us, and to accept the fact that we are inextricably connected—whether we choose to be or not—and that other life forms are hanging upon the decisions we make today.

Finding daily ways to reduce your carbon footprint is easy: Just ask a kid if you're not sure where to start. Taking a walk outside and popping the trunk (on your hybrid) to confirm that there's no "spare" planet inside—now that's the tough part. □

#### *Editor's Note:*

*And so begins a new year of stories about Virginia's wildlife and wild places. Occasionally, you will find a postscript here—when space allows and as issues warrant. Climate change is one of those issues. It's an uncomfortable topic that we must somehow find a way to get comfortable discussing. Here, the sentiments expressed are mine alone. Your comments are welcome at [sally.mills@dgif.virginia.gov](mailto:sally.mills@dgif.virginia.gov).*

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